

Message Text

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22

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 EA-07 PC-01 /103 W

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R 190900Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4347

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECSTION 1 OF 2 NIAMEY 3292

E.O. 11652: GDS

UGS: PINS, PFOR, NG

SUBJECT: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE

1. MY FAREWELL CALL ON PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE MORNING OF JULY 16 PROMPTED USUAL ROUND OF REMINISCENCES, REFLECTIONS, AND MUTUAL GOOD WISHES FOR FUTURE.

2. RECALLING THAT I HAD STARTED HERE SHORTLY AFTER MILITARY TAKE-OVER AND THAT I WAS FIRST AMBASSADOR TO BE ACCREDITED TO NEW REGIME, I SAID I THOUGHT WE HAD COME A LONG WAY TOGETHER AND THAT IT WAS REASSURING AS I LEFT TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT US-NIGER RELATIONS WERE IN GOOD SHAPE AND THAT WE WERE WORKING TOGETHER EFFECTIVELY AND PRODUCTIVELY ON A VARIETY OF IMPORTANT PROJECTS WHICH SHOULD
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CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIALLY TO DEVELOPMENT OF NIGER.

3. I ADDED THAT I HAD JUST SENT A MESSAGE TO WASHINGTON NOTING THAT NIGER WAS RUN BY A GOVERNMENT THAT WAS NOT CAUSING US OR ITS NEIGHBORS TROUBLE, THAT HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH US, THAT VALUED AND APPRECIATED OUR ASSISTANCE AND OUR EFFORTS TO HELP DEVELOP THE COUNTRY, THAT WAS FOCUSING ON ITS OWN BUSINESS, AND THAT WAS SERIOUS AND HARD-WORKING. I WONDERED HOW MANY OTHER COUNTRIES IN AFRICA COULD FIT THIS DESCRIPTION.

4. KOUNTCHE FAVORED ME WITH ONE OF HIS RARE SMILES, AGREED WITH FOREGOING CHARACTERIZATION OF NIGER AND OF US-NIGER RELATIONS AND THEN LAUNCHED INTO ONE OF HIS MONOLOGUES. HE STARTED BY SAYING THAT IT WAS NOT EASY FOR MILITARY TO SEIZE POWER, NO MATTER HOW ATTRACTIVE THE ADVENTURE MIGHT SEEM AT THE OUTSET. THE PROCEDURE ITSELF WAS RISKY BUSINESS BECAUSE ONE MILITARY COUP ENCOURAGED ANOTHER, AND THERE WERE MANY MILITARY OFFICERS WHO CONSIDERED THEY WERE AS GOOD AS THE NEXT MAN AND WERE TEMPTED TO TRY THEIR HAND. SECONDLY, THERE WAS PROBLEM OF GETTING SATISFACTORY MIX BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIANS. MANY MILITARY BELIEVE THEY CAN RUN THE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT CIVILIAN ASSISTANCE. HE IS PROUD THAT PRESENT CABINET OF NIGER HAS A GOOD COMBINATION OF CIVILIANS AND MILITARY WITH FORMER IN THE MAJORITY BUT IT HAS BEEN A HARD FIGHT INVOLVING CONSIDERABLE MANEUVERING TO BRING THIS ABOUT OVER OPPOSITION OF SOME OF HIS MILITARY COLLEAGUES. FINALLY, THERE IS PROBLEM OF ENERGIZING THE BUREAUCRACY AND ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR NATION TO FOLLOW. DURING LAST TWO YEARS, OFFICERS HAVE PLOTTED AGAINST HIM, THE BUREAUCRACY HAS OCCASIONALLY SAT ON ITS HANDS OR SABOTAGED HIS EFFORTS AND THERE ARE FAR TOO MANY EXAMPLES OF CORRUPTION AND MISUSE OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS. DURING RECENT VISIT TO ZINDER AND MARADI, HE HAD TO SACK VARIOUS OPVN AND OTHER OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN ILLICIT ACTIVITIES IN EMERGENCY GRAP DISTRIBUTION BUSINESS. THIS KIND OF THING HE WOULD NOT TOLERATE.

5. KOUNTCHE SAID HE WELL AWARE PEOPLE CALLED HIM DICTATOR AND FELT THAT SOME OF HIS DECISIONS IMPINGED ON PERSONAL LIBERTIES; COMMENT: THIS WAS REFERENCE TO RECENT FLAP OVER KOUNTCHE'S PERSONAL INTERVENTION OF PRIVATE TRANSACTION CONFIDENTIAL

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BY CIVIL SERVANT WHO HAD SOLD HIS FAMILY INHERITANCE OF LAND AND HOUSES TO BUY A MERCEDES. KOUNTCHE CANCELLED TRANSACTION, FORCING OFFICIAL TO GET RID OF CAR AND TAKE BACK HIS LAND. END COMMENT. SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVELY HE SAID HE DID NOT PLAN TO INTERFERE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES BUT CIVIL SERVANTS SHOULD RESPECT THE CONFIDENCE REPOSED IN THEM AND EVERYONE SHOULD USE HIS RESOURCES FOR PRODUCTIVE PURPOSES AND NOT FRIVOLITY.

6. TURNING TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS, KOUNTCHE REVERTED TO HIS CURRENT THEME TO EFFECT THAT TOO MANY AFRICAN LEADERS ARE MORE CONCERNED WITH MAKING SPEECHES THAN PUTTING THEIR HOUSE IN ORDER WHICH LEADS TO RABBLE ROUSING INSTEAD OF RATIONAL POLICIES AND HELPS CREATE A CONDITION IN AFRICA WHICH THE SOVIETS COULD EXPLOIT. THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED SAYING THAT OVERALL AFRICAN SCENE WAS DISTURBING ONE AND HE ANTICIPATED FURTHER CRISES WHETHER THEY WERE GENERATED BY QADHAFI'S EFFORTS AT SUBVERSION, IDI AMIN'S CAPRICIOUS AND IRRESPONSIBLE ACTS, REGIONAL CONFLICTS AS BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALI OR IN WESTERN SAHARA, OR TENSIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. ALL THIS GENERATED SITUATION WHICH ATTRACTED QUOTE THE BIG POWERS UNQUOTE. EACH OF BIG POWERS, HE NOTED, WAS MOTIVATED BY ITS OWN SELF-INTERESTS BUT AT PRESENT ONLY SOVIETS SEEM CAPABLE OF ACTING ON THEM; AND THE US WAS HAMSTRUNG BY ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND CHINESE WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH SUCCESSION ISSUE AS MAO RETIRED FROM SCENE.

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PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

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R 190600Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4348

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AKMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 0363

A/MEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU 3829

AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NIAMEY 3292

7. THERE WERE ALSO ARAB STATES WHICH SHOULD NOT BE OVER-LOOKED. THEY WERE BEGINNING TO HELP IN VARIOUS WAYS BUT THEY ALSO CONSTITUTED A THREAT AS THEY RAISED PORTICAL ANTE FOR THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT. IN MES CONNECTIONS HE WENTIONED THAT SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES WERE URGING HIM TO ALIGN NIGER WITH SO-CALLED PROGRESSIVE ARAB STATES, HE WAS OPPOSED, BUT GIVEN FINANCIAL SUPPORT WHICH SAUDI ARABIA PROVIDES NIGER, HE COULD NOT TURN HIS BACK ON THAT COUNTRY OR IGNORE ITS VIEWS ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES.

8. COMING CLOSER TO HOME, KOUNTCHE SAID ENVIRONMENT WAS NOT CONDUCIVE TO OPTIMISM. IN THE EAST (CHAD) THERE WAS REGIME WITH WHICH NIGER HAD LITTLE IN COMMON. TO THE SOUTHEAST THERE WAS COLOSSUS OF NIGERIA WHICH FIGURED HEAVILY IN NIGER'S CALCULATIONS, BUT
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CURRENTLY SEEMED SEIZED WITH DOMESTIC CONCERNS AND HAD LITTLE TIME FOR NIGER; AND BENIN FOR WHICH KOUNTCHE HAD LITTLE GOOD TO SAY. AS LAND-LOCKED COUNTRY, NIGER WAS DEPENDENT ON BENIN'S COOPERATION WHICH WAS NOT FORTH-COMING. HE HAD LITTLE TIME FOR KEREKOU WHO, HE NOTED, WAS CURRENTLY ON A JUNKET TO THE EAST. ONE WONDERED WHAT POWER WAS BEHIND BENIN AND ENCOURAGING IT IN ITS IRRESPONSIBLE POLICIES. HE ADDED PARENTHETICALLY THAT HE HAD JUST HEARD THAT KEREKOU RESPONDED TO TOAST IN PEKING AT DINNER IN HIS HONOR DURING HIS VISIT THERE THIS WEEK, WITH SPEECH OF 58 MINUTES. THIS PRESUMABLY GAVE KEREKOU HIGH MARKS FOR REVOLUTIONARY FERVOR BUT ONE WONDERED WHAT EFFECT THIS HAD ON BENIN-CHINESE RELATIONS.

9. TO THE WEST, THERE WERE UPPER VOLTA AND MALI. NIGER HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH FORMER WHICH HOWEVER SEEMED TO BE HAVING DOMESTIC PROBLEMS OF ITS OWN. MALI-NIGER RELATIONS WERE SATISFACTORY WITH MALI APPARENTLY GOING THROUGH GENERAL RE-ORIENTATION OF ITS FOREIGN POLICY. REAL THREAT TO NIGER'S SECURITY LAY TO THE NORTH. HE WAS UNEASY ABOUT ALGERIA'S INTENTIONS AND LIBYA'S EFFORTS AT SUBVERSION WERE WELL-KNOWN.

10. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, KOUNTCHE SAID, IT WAS NOT AN ENCOURAGING SCENE AND THIS WAS ALL THE MORE REGRETTABLE BECAUSE WHAT AFRICAN STATES LIKE NIGER NEEDED MOST WAS PEACE, TRANQUILITY AND STABILITY TO CONCENTRATE ON DOMESTIC MATTERS AND DEVELOPMENT. HE

RECOGNIZED THAT NIGER COULD NOT ISOLATE ITSELF AND
MANY OF HIS FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS WERE HOLDING
ACTIONS WHILE HE TRIED TO GET ON WITH BUSINESS OF
DEVELOPMENT. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE WAS DEEPLY APPRECI-
TIVE OF US RESPONSE TO NIGER'S NEEDS AND SUPPORT FOR
ITS DEVELOPMENT. HECK

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